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The SOJOURNER
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A PUBLICATION OF THE CENTER FOR AFRICANA STUDIES AT CENTRAL CONNECTICUT STATE UNIVERSITY

THE BLACK AESTHETICS



A LEGACY OF LOVE AND EMPOWERMENT

PART TWO: THE 1960s and BEYOND

Message from the Editor in Chief

It is my pleasure to welcome each of you to read and to reflect upon this Spring semester's continuation issue that covers the second half of *The Black Aesthetics: A Legacy of Love and Empowerment* that features the 1960s to present times. With a critical examination of the Black Aesthetics' influence and impact, we are motivated to provide this issue as a means of prompting complex questions based on relevant commentaries and perspectives that do more than give voice to our uniqueness and to our beauty. It delves further into the essence of our existence that is informed by a qualitative energy that keeps us forever linked to our true familial and cultural legacies as powerful people.

My sincere hope is that this issue keeps us proactive in upholding any legacy that provides a road map to better understand our destiny as a collective force. Certainly, the indelible imprint of 1960s and 1970s continues to be relevant in this 21st century. These two decades, in particular, are moments in time that teach us, presently, to challenge the status quo. One major way to do this is to be mindful of the numerous contributors to the Black Aesthetics who exposed the best of our literature, art, music, and politics so that ordinary and extraordinary people could enable all of us to be honored beneficiaries of gifts that become more and more priceless as we continue to progress as multi-dimensional people. As an expanded version, therefore, of the previous issue, the feature article explores the 1960s Black Aesthetics' ideology as a core legacy which has and continue to add value and meaning to our lives. Select articles in this issue include CCSU's staff and students who participated in questionnaires or class discussions and shared their ideas about the Black Aesthetics' meaning and influence. In addition, the Ninth Amistad Lecture and the Center for Africana Studies' Spring Lecture and Film events along with our core standing topic of News from the Motherland made this a very special issue to complete.

For all who contributed to *The Black Aesthetics*, Parts One and Two, we offer our sincere gratitude.

Dr. Beverly A. Johnson

Features in this Issue

Page 4	The Black Aesthetics' Legacy: Part II
Page 6	The Black Aesthetics Revisited: Various Perspectives
Page 10	Ninth Annual Amistad Lecture
Page 12	Center for African Studies: Spring Lectures and Films
Page 16.....	News from the Motherland
Page 18.....	International Festival at CCSU

READERS' COMMENTS

The article “LAMP: Literature, Art, Music and Politics” in The Black Aesthetics (Part One) of *The Sojourner Truth* newsletter gave me a wider understanding of how much L.A.M.P. gives us a voice in this world and how it makes a huge impact not only in the lives of African Americans but in cultures everywhere. I was intrigued by the article’s uplifting focus, inspiring us to triumph over our challenges. “LAMP” shines an inevitable light that allows us to see ourselves reflected strongly through everyday life experiences.

Azria Rountree, CCSU Junior, Communication Major

The article “The Black Aesthetics: A Legacy of Love and Empowerment” is an eye opening piece which highlights the impact people of color have had in history. Through hard work and love, Black ancestral leaders such as Frederick Douglass and Harriet Tubman have paved the way for current and future leaders to continue our cultural progression and self-preservation. I enjoyed this article because as a person of color, I feel obligated to apply a strong work ethic as a reminder of the hard work put forth by my ancestors and as an inspiration to become a role model for future generations.

Maurice Patterson, CCSU Junior, Biology Major

The “Black Aesthetics: A Legacy of Love and Empowerment” article in the September - December 2011 issue of *The Sojourner Truth* was very informative. I agree with the article’s point that the Black community is as powerful as it is today because of the efforts of our ancestors. They took it upon themselves to bring Blacks together with a sense of community. To forget their contributions would be an injustice.

Curtis Knighton, CCSU Freshman, Exercise Science and Health Promotion Major

Reading the different views about the Black Aesthetics in “Legacies Remembered” made me want to further research the early Black Aesthetics proponents in the 19th and early 20th centuries. I agree with Kristen Rogers’ comments about the inspirers such as Du Bois and Garvey who worked hard to eliminate racial discrimination. This article does a good job explaining how past legacies created standards for our success.

David Rose, CCSU Freshman, Biology Major

Reading “News from the Motherland” made me wish I knew more about the influences in the lives of young African girls. “The encouragement of self-development in African women” is a powerful phrase because African women have a right to equal importance in the world, and their accomplishments shine through despite hatred, injustice, and abuse they endure.

Samaris Guzman, CCSU Freshman, Pre Med Major

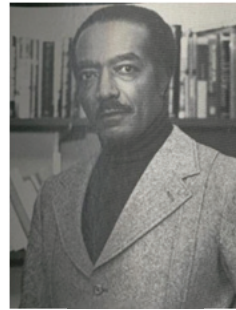
The Black Aesthetics: A Legacy of Love and Empowerment –Part II
The 1960s and Beyond



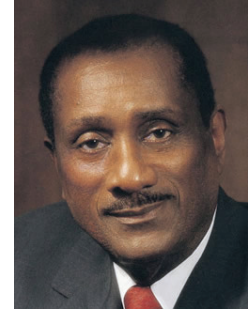
Nikki Giovanni



Addison Gayle



Hoyt Fuller



John Johnson

As an undeniable period of self-awareness and group empowerment for people representing the African Diaspora, the Black Aesthetics' continues to be regarded in high esteem by many people of color for several legitimate reasons. Most prominent, the Black Aesthetics played a huge role in defining the decades of the sixties and seventies. These time periods highlight the ultimate sacrifices of powerful leaders, social upheavals from various groups, and political uncertainties with global consequence, and they also outlined the inevitable consciousness that grew in a continuous manner and enabled us to shift our voices and our presence from marginal positions to influential positions in American society. In an empowering manner, the Black Aesthetics became a transformative and corrective agent of change during these times, as Hoyt Fuller and Addison Gayle proposed strongly in their writings about the concept. Their works emphasized an “aesthetic resistance” to mainstream standards that distorted or diluted the idea for so many people of color. Thus, the uplifting of people of color takes hold throughout the society by the direct articulation of basic human rights merging with active participation in the Black Arts and Civil Rights Movements.

Many Black communities of the sixties and seventies felt energized and proud to support the literature, art, music, and politics that they could identify with and that could represent, collectively, the voices for disenfranchised people. This involvement that lead to forms of evolvment could not have been possible without the clarity of vision needed by relevant individuals and groups who took the time to re-analyzed the past struggles and legacies of our various cultural ancestors. People representing the African Diaspora understood that the inherited ancestral legacies were special cultural gifts shown as a moral compass and a solid work ethic that designed a pathway to freedom when framed within the context of a righteous fighting spirit.

The Black Aesthetics, naturally, becomes a broader based concept of resistance and love that captures, in this type of resistance movement, the fuller beauty and fuller essence of people of color than mainstream America accepted or even understood. For instance, the term *double consciousness* coined by W. E.B. Du Bois was reinterpreted and readjusted to promote a strong Black Diaspora link while also emphasizing the process of de-Americanization of Black people in multiple ways. Certainly, the famous poem by Paul Laurence Dunbar “*We Wear the Mask*” could have easily concluded with the phrase *No Longer!* during these two decades.

This resistance was further shown, to some degree, with the rather short lived journals of Fuller’s *Black World* and subsequent *First World* that gave voice to several noted poets and authors such as Mari Evans, Carolyn Rodgers, and Alice Walker. Considered marginal publications at best by today’s mainstream standards, these publications were instrumental in serving the aesthetic interest of people of color who perceived John Johnson’s *Ebony* magazine as too mainstream and thus rather ineffective as a transforming agent for Black people. One can only fathom the tangible impact of both Fuller’s and Johnson’s work had the two visionaries been able to work together on a more permanent basis.

Much more attention should be given to the influence and impact of the Black Aesthetics in present times as this issue of *The Sojourner Truth* newsletter attempts to address because the value of the Black Aesthetics during the sixties and seventies to people of color cannot and should not be underestimated. The nation benefited twofold from the select societal transformations that created platforms for effective group organization of nonviolent actions and from the repeal of unjust and discriminatory laws. Although subtle, another equally relevant gain for many people of color living in the United States was the serious practice of internal dialogues of discernment. These practices were quite influential in creating morally based perspectives of self-worth and collective power. Subsequently, these perspectives empowered people of color to reject the external misery that plagued their communities due to ineffective representation and fear based rhetoric (and violence) that could no longer be viable means of control over a people’s destiny. It is therefore noteworthy to point out how the legacy of the Black Aesthetics has been visibly and effectively applied beyond the sixties. Although there are several more, this short list below of five key attributes, suggests that there is a value system in place that should continue to empower us throughout the 21st century because the value of these attributes is central to the representation of us and what defines us as a people:

First, the acknowledgement of quality work by people of color that is critiqued by people of color is apparent throughout prior decades and in current times.

Continued on page 11



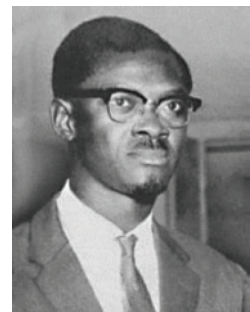
Angela Davis



Bill Cosby



Marvin Gaye



Patrice Lumumba

The Black Aesthetics Revisited: Various Perspectives

It is a learning experience to read about the views or perspectives of select staff members at Central Connecticut State University. We can gain through this act a deeper appreciation and respect for the values of others, and we can also promote a stronger sense of community within the workplace. With these benefits in mind, the sharing of ideas about the Black Aesthetics from staff members Darlene Jordan, Heidi Huguley-Brown, and George Richardson led to engaging and insightful answers that varied in perceptions about the concept since the 1960s. Similarly, these participants' remarks not only reveal the pride embedded in the Black Aesthetic concept, but they also share a concern for the utilization of the concept in more present times.

As Part One issue of the Sept- Dec 2011 *Sojourner Truth* framed the Black Aesthetics as a concept of defining and redefining standards of beauty that uplifts and enhances the lives of people of color, Part Two shifts to a more contemporary and futuristic approach during and beyond the sixties. The answers provided by participants suggest that the Black Aesthetics continues to be a concept that represents the empowerment and the progression inherent in the lives of people of color today. However, perceptions of the legacy inherent within the concept vary when viewed under the context of a collective future of the Black Diaspora.

The participants' answers are based on at least three options from the list below of the five following questions:

1. How do you define the concept or phrase?
2. What image do you connect with a strong message when you think of the phrase?
3. Who represents or exemplifies the Black Aesthetics to you?
4. Is the Black Aesthetics used as a form of empowerment by young adults currently?
5. What is the most appropriate answer or answers of the concept based on the four choices below?
 - A. The Black Aesthetics captures a moment in that is no longer relevant to people of color.
 - B. The concept is a fragmented version of Black pride practiced by select groups, typically, with social and political agendas.
 - C. The Black Aesthetics is a valued reflection of people of color that helps to define who we are as a collective force.
 - D. The Black Aesthetics is underestimated and devalued as a means of empowerment for people of color and people representing the Black Diaspora.

Provided are summarized versions of the participants' answers.

Darlene Jordan



The phrase is an expression of Black people’s life experiences through art, poetry, and theater. Alex Haley displayed it through the book and subsequent movie *Roots*. Mr. Haley took us back to the experiences of our ancestors for us to have a better understanding of where we are today. If we are not where we want to be in life today, we can only blame ourselves, for so many of our ancestors have paid the price for us to become whatever our hearts desire.

George Richardson



I define the concept of “The Black Aesthetics” as having pride and dignity. The Black Panthers, Malcolm X and Angela Davis represent this image. Community support was Davis’s biggest influence and a dominant message she presented during her lecture a few years ago at CCSU. Even though I don’t see a lot of young adult being empowered currently by the concept, I believe “The Black Aesthetics” is still relevant today. It is just more undercover in today’s time than in the sixties and seventies.

Heidi Huguley-Brown



I conceptually define “The Black Aesthetics” phrase from an African American perspective. It promotes the ability to see myself, be myself and express myself in a way that is not manipulated or mandated by mainstream norms. While one might first think of the aesthetics as a model of physical attributes, I believe that is only partly true. It is much more about keeping a person’s physiological and emotional condition in the best state possible in a society that is not favorable to acceptance and equality. When I think of the phrase “The Black Aesthetics,” the image I see is the Obama family on the cover of *Ebony* magazine. I believe the concept is used as a form of empowerment currently by young adults; however, this empowerment is represented in many ways, some

for positive outcomes and some for negative outcomes. “The Black Aesthetics” is a “survival of the fittest” motivator and contender in a world where young adults must find their way, even in situations that make it seem as though no way is possible. It is true that this aesthetics is underestimated as a means of empowerment, yet it continues to define who we are as a collective force.

Students' Perspectives: The Black Aesthetics Revisited

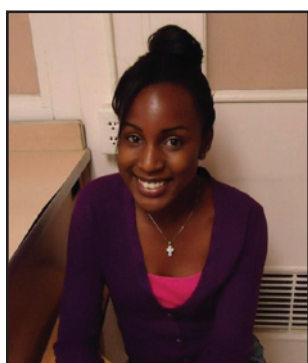
Although several students from CCSU participated in the creation of this topic and article by sharing their views of “*The Black Aesthetics*” Part II *The Sixties and Beyond*, four CCSU participants, Bryan Crawford, Christina Carpenter, Kentrale Evans, and Asham Hamilton captured the majority of sentiments about the concept. Seen primarily through the prism of the Black American experience, their nuanced answers similarly reveal positive contemporary promoters of the aesthetics; however, they also address concerns about young people’s utilization of the concept in current times. Each student participant was given the same five questions as the staff members, and they were asked to answer only three of the five questions on page six. Below are their comments generated through individual discernment about the concept and, collectively, through class discussions in the previous and the current ENG 212: African American literature course.

Bryan Crawford



I like the phrase “The Black Aesthetics” as a strengthening of African Americans through the works of art and culture. Larry Neal and Nikki Giovanni are two individuals who pointed out the influence of white ideas and values on African American culture. Both individuals influenced the Black Power Movement and expressed a high level of racial pride. As a young adult, I believe the concept isn’t as empowering as it once was due to lack of media exposure and lack of activists spreading the message about it.

Christina Carpenter



From an African American cultural perspective, I define the phrase as a reform of African American artistic expression that allows us to be comfortable in our own skin. One major image I associate with “The Black Aesthetics” is the March on Washington. The march’s intent of ending segregation and discrimination on several levels was very powerful. Two African Americans who exemplifies the concept is President and First Lady Obama. Both have overcome obstacles, yet they show confidence and have positive spirits as leaders despite the pressures and criticisms they regularly face. They are outstanding examples who prove wrong the stereotypes that exist about African American males and females. I believe “The Black Aesthetics” is an empowering concept for young adults today. HBCU’s (historically black colleges and universities) enforced this concept in the past and continue to do so as well as some musicians and athletes who become mentors and inspirational leaders. I believe it is true that the concept is fragmented and practiced by select groups with a social or political agenda. The educational and political roles of Bill Cosby and Condoleezza Rice are two key examples. Cosby and Rice are seen as role models who help other African- Americans feel that they have people to look up to. I truly believe that “The Black Aesthetics” is a valued reflection of people of color that helps to define who we are as a collective force. We have evolved and become educated about our past to, hopefully, create rather than to repeat it.

Kentrale Evans



Past pioneers' ideals of Blackness is core to an interpretation of "The Black Aesthetics." A concept prominently encouraged in the 1960s and 1970s to promote a true self- motivated Black culture in an unequal American society. "The Black Aesthetics" captures strength and creativity of the individual in order to understand and express the unique internal power one has to overcome negativity and oppression. The "Black Power fist" image signifies this aesthetics through unity and strength that allowed people to stand their ground and fight for what they believed in. This image coupled with protest marches presented a power undefined by the privileged society.

Two people who represent "The Black Aesthetics" are Oprah Winfrey and Tyler Perry. As an iconic figure, Winfrey uses her interpretation of Black empowerment to forge better constructs of leadership for women of color, and Perry modernized the idea with the hiring of people of color actors and creating movies that aid in keeping the aesthetics from fading in modern times. In addition, there are negative entities (such as the degrading of women in hip hop music) hindering a continued aesthetic force, yet young adults are projecting racial pride in numerous ways in order to remain on a positive path of overcoming oppressions and embracing the beauty of Blackness.

Asham Hamilton



When I think of the aesthetics, words like art, culture, preferences, and beauty come to mind as well as Black people of African descent. When I question our tendencies or what works effectively for us, I come to the conclusion that music is one of the most accessible forms of aesthetic representation from our culture that communicate the messages we want to communicate to the world. Today, our people are diverse and want to be seen as diverse, yet we have maintained our identity in favorable ways and are deemed a significant part of an advancing society. The 2008 Presidential campaign and election of President Obama are recent indicators of how far and wide people of color have ventured. Obama's image of redefining leadership with hope and promise while garnering undivided worldwide attention project a message that we are serious and perfect just the way we are. Furthermore, Oprah

Winfrey and Jay Z are two individuals who represent "The Black Aesthetics" currently. Both convey a love of self and remain true to their values in order to be successful entrepreneurs who are positive representatives of society's upper class.

The Ninth Annual Amistad Lecture

“The Life and Times of the *Amistad* Returnees to Sierra Leone and Their Impact
A Pluridisciplinary Exploration”



Professor Bangura gives the keynote address at the 9th annual Amistad lecture

As a core part of February’s Black History Month events at Central Connecticut State University, the Amistad Lecture and Banquet was held on February 28th 2012 in Founders Hall from 3:00-4:20 p.m. Prior to the keynote address presented by Research Methodology and Political Science Professor, Abdul Karim Bangura of Howard University, Co-Committee Chair and Professor of Educational Leadership, Dr. Olusegun Sogunro, delivered a heartfelt welcome and a notable moment of silence for the Amistad members and the numerous contributors of justice and peace who help create memories that sustain the African Diaspora. Brief greetings and remarks by Provost and Vice President of Academic Affairs, Carl Lovitt, Dean of Arts and Sciences, Susan Pease, and Dr. Warren Perry (Anthropology) reasserted warm wishes to Professor Bangura. These greetings were followed by the poetry reading titled “Transcendent Spirits” by Dr. Beverly A. Johnson (English). Afterwards, Dr. Gloria Emeagwali (History) introduced the keynote speaker by highlighting some of his many scholarly accomplishments. These accomplishments include an extensive faculty biography of sixty-five books written and multiple Ph.Ds.

In front of a full and attentive audience, Professor Abdul Karim Bangura provided a historical background and critique of the Amistad returnees to Sierra Leone that had been, in part, a focus of the core theme from the Eighth Amistad lecture in 2011. He initially shared an overview of the Amistad story as a backdrop to how historians, in particular, are typically accused of misrepresentations, especially when they challenge myths or offer their interpretation to the displeasure of certain critics. This reaction toward historians, Bangura believes, promotes avoidance and marginalization of historians and their work. The ramification of this, according to Bangura, is historical ignorance. Bangura also offered a critical backstory of the Spielberg movie *Amistad* that took dramatic license in select scenes, and he asserted that the history depicted in the movie was “frequently incomprehensible and misleading when it was not just plain wrong.” By contrasting *Amistad* with the *Titanic* film, he strongly suggested that stereotypes are more welcomed than factual depictions in the production of historical events.



Left -Right: Dr. W. Perry and Dr. S. Jones listen to Bangura's lecture.



Prof. Bangura poses with Prof. Olusegun Sogunro: Amistad's committee Co-chair



President Miller with keynote speaker: Recipient of the 9th annual Amistad banquet award.



Author Okey Ndibe reflects keenly on Bangura's lecture.

Bangura divided his lecture into four key parts: the returnees and their reintegration in Sierra Leone; the true missionary agenda; the impact of Islamic and Christianity within the Sierra Leone society and the unsubstantiated accusation that Sengbe Pieh (Joseph Cinque) was a slave trader. These sections allowed Bangura to cover his pluri-disciplinary approach by combining history, political science, international relations and linguistic application and other disciplines to fully examine the layered circumstances embedded in a comprehensive and a more accurate Amistad story. After the brief question and answer session hosted by Dr. Harris, Dr. Johnson offered closing remarks and an audience invitation to the Ninth Annual Banquet honoring the keynote speaker and "The Heroes of the Amistad" that was held in the Constitution Room of Memorial Hall. ■

The Black Aesthetics: Part II-The 1960s and Beyond: continued

Second, the rediscovery of heritage within and outside of the United States continues to be a life changing experience for many people of color.

Third, the open expressions of self-identity linked to the collective in various media forms speak to empowered voices that continue to demand center stage.

Fourth, the resoluteness to acknowledge and to reject racism and covert forms of discrimination is a visible and standard practice in communities throughout this country.

Fifth, the act of honoring and celebrating people of color who have achieved great heights and who have been steadfast in remembering and respecting the sacrifices of cultural and familial ancestors is a worthwhile tradition.

While in the midst of travel on any road of uncertainty, people of color can take time to reflect upon the Black Aesthetics' true value to gain sound footing. This is a mental journey worth experiencing because the ancestral gifts of love and empowerment will guide one to the legacy he or she can be proud to uphold for so many decades to come. ■

Johnson, B.

References

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 Gates, Henry Jr. and N. McKay eds. *The Norton Anthology of African American Literature*.
 New York: Norton, 1997. Print.
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Center for Africana Studies: Spring Lectures and Films

The Center for Africana Studies played a central role this semester as the site of educational and communal events for the months of March and April. As part of the Center's lecture series, two featured lectures were presented by Dean Mokgale Makgopa, (University of Venda - South Africa) and Communication Art Professor Anthony Naaeke. Makgopa's lecture entitled "A Comparative Analysis of the Influence of Folklore in the Works of South African Writers" was held in the evening of March 29th 2012 with a fully attended audience of students and community members. The gist of Makgopa's lecture focused on the analysis of oral literature and folklore as major influences for South Africans writers. Dean Makgopa asserted that several writers who wrote in a foreign language have folklore elements that inform their writings, particularly, in the contexts of identity and community. This lecture underscored the impact of missionary education for several authors who presented missionary-guided ideals while suggesting a devaluing of indigenous knowledge and culture. By conversing about the fictional works of three writers, Makobe, Matsepe, and Nkadimeng, Makgopa provided selected examples of these writers' works that the audience could make reference to with printed handouts.

Makgopa reiterated that these writers collectively send the message that oral language should never be underestimated and undermined in societies because "orality is a vital part of a person's identity and community." Noting the dearth of scholarly material properly linking spoken language and inter-textuality, Makgopa emphasized the theory of "Afrikan Humanism" has a very broad reach in various literary realms. He believes South African writers in more modern times have more opportunities to acknowledge the significance of oral culture through the backdrop of this theory. At the conclusion of his lecture, Makgopa answered questions from CCSU students Asham Hamilton, Lula Woodard, and Jake Fusco. In particular, Hamilton raised questions about the possibility of an internationally based African language while Woodard and Fusco expressed interest in the Swahili language and the spoken locations of it that unify the African Diaspora.

Dr. Naaeke's lecture entitled "Dagaaba Culture of Ghana through Rhetorical Analysis" was held on April 19th 2012 at 3:30 p.m. Naaeke gave an attentive audience further insight into the lives of the Dagaaba (in northwestern Ghana). He highlighted their way of life as subsistence farmers who experience several months of dry season yearly. He shared the typical world view of the Dagaaba as strongly religious, emphasizing religion as fundamental to their reality. Thus, religion is pro-actively practiced in the everyday life experiences of the Dagaaba people.

Naaeke further illuminated the systematic way of life for the Dagaaba people and culture as one that is patriarchal and traditionally myth oriented, and these factors make the role and place of women in the Dagaaba culture a worthy research endeavor. Naaeke asserted that the religious rituals and folklore can offer ways to obtain a better understanding of the way of life of a people. For example, Naaeke revealed that a Dagaaba child not only sees but participate in the practice of symbols and learns to live the meanings, values, norms, ideals etc., the symbols represent.

By conveying through the Dagaaba the “inseparability between interpretation and language use,” Naaeke, a Dagaao, believes his research will continue to offer vital contributions to the information collected about the Dagaaba people and their beliefs. ■



Spring lectures held in the Center for Africana Studies: Top left to right: Dean Makgopa presents his lecture to CCSU students and community members, ENG 212 African American Literature students discuss folklore elements within Makgopa’s lecture and African American novels.

Bottom left to right: Dr. Perry introduces Dr. Naaeke as the Center’s guest lecturer: Dr. Naaeke lectures to the audience about the Dagaaba culture.



Center for Africana Studies: April Films

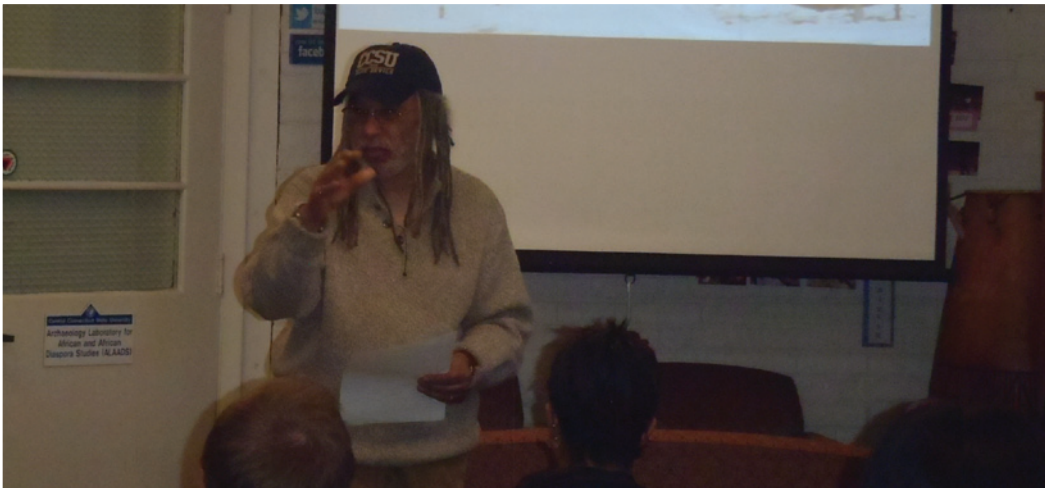
On April 10th and 11th of this year the Center for Africana Studies held film documentaries of two poignant topics representing the sixties and seventies time period. Shown in sequence to stress their full impact, *COINTELPRO* and *The Black Power Mix-Tapes 1965-1975* emphasized to audience members the sacrifices many African-American leaders made to improve the quality of life for people of color in the United States of America during this tumultuous time. They collectively presented the essence of the struggle for select leaders whose voices and actions affirm their unwavering commitment to the struggle for basic human and civil rights. Although varied in content, each film echoed core Black Aesthetic principles of maintaining a fighting spirit of love through the guidance of a moral compass, regardless of the odds against doing so.

These films show that key leaders within groups such as the *Black Panther Party* and *SNCC* understood the power of informative speeches and effective organization. They felt that strong actions steeped in Black Power rather than empty rhetoric would change the harsh conditions of many people who felt (on an everyday basis) the social, political and economic restrictions mainstream America used to maintain its position of power and dominance over disenfranchised people.

COINTELPRO 101 takes a close look at the unlawful enforcement of terror inflicted upon activists and groups that represented the Black Power Movement with the intent to hinder or stop the progression of Black people and racial justice throughout the country. The acronym represents the counterintelligence program that linked the local, state, and federal government agencies. Although prominent leaders such as Stokely Carmichael, Huey P. Newton, and Bobby Seale are featured, Fred Hampton and the impact of his short life profoundly reveal the depths taken to stop progressive leaders by the local, state and federal agencies. Hampton, an activist and Deputy Chairman of the Illinois chapter of the Black Panther Party, was murdered during a police raid and strong evidence within the film links the FBI not only to his murder but to numerous other unlawful acts intent to suppress Black leaders' impact within Black communities and to destroy the progressive organizations that they represented.

Within the *Black Power Mixtape 1967-1975* documentary, several key leaders are featured with excerpts of their ideals documented by the Swedish media and later presented by as a "mixtape" by Director Goran Hugo Olsson. Often contrasting the depictions of mainstream media, this film showcases the historical experiences of African Americans in the context of the Black Power Movement with current voices such as Talib Kweli and Erykah Badu providing relevant commentary. Two core messages that resonate throughout the film are that these leaders were ordinary people who used their talents effectively, and they were able to connect on an emotional and a spiritual level with the people.

In addition, their success in life was the result of the people who struggled and sacrificed to place them in the position to be leaders. Thus, they viewed themselves most prominently in the collective realm rather than as individualists seeking attention from mainstream media. Both documentaries are intended to educate and to prompt relevant discussions, particularly, for people born after the sixties and seventies and for those who remember and can share their own perspectives of these times. ■



Dr. Warren Perry engages in dialogue with CCSU students and provides context for the documentaries as they watch them.

News from the Motherland

In this Spring semester's standard section of the newsletter, we decided to focus on a very significant and recent change within the African continent. The division between Sudan and Southern Sudan marks a pattern worthy of discernment, and this is addressed in C.M.T. Assado's article here that speaks to the uncertain future ahead for both countries.

Against the Common Wisdom: Why the Big Sudan Was Not Better?

The end of Cold War era and the crest of globalization in the nineties forced many countries to re-access their abilities to survive in the new political and economic global contest. Variables from prospectively growing economic, cultural and political interactions among nations needed to be put in the right strategic perspective. Surely a phenomenal challenge when nations had to re-define their compass. Hence many countries recognized very early that political and economic bargaining power would be a major factor for their competitiveness in the global environment. So the country's size and number of population would matter. Historically, for instance, the well-established economic dominance of USA over decades is fundamentally attributed to aligned economic, cultural and political union of the 50 member states. The

“Smaller countries by nature, circa 90% of all nations of the globe, can only acquire any global political stance and subsequent economic development through collaborative partnerships”

USA success model explains, to some degree, the political decisions in Europe that favored a much stronger European economic-union, even with the introduction of the EURO as common currency in 1999 and the accelerated rise of China as an economic power house. In general, it can be argued that a growing number of countries have managed to take very good advantage of the globalization opportunities and consequently have been enjoying growing economic and political success.

Illustrative cases are the success stories from the so called BRICS-countries Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa. All these country have a common denominator: They are reasonably big by size and the number of their respective population is in the 3-digits million or larger. With admittedly a few exceptions, global political weight and rapid yet sustainable economic development are directly related to country size and its number of population. Smaller countries by nature, circa 90% of all nations of the globe, can only acquire any global political stance and subsequent economic development through collaborative partnerships. The emergence of regional integration organizations across the globe, in the case of the African continent, ECOWAS (Western Africa), SADC-(Southern Africa), EAC-(Eastern Africa) is justifiable common wisdom and represents for many of these countries the only viable and mandatory road map for survival as sovereign nations.

However, against the trend of most nations that pursue global influence through size, here we are in 21st century, witnessing a secession of Sudan in two smaller, politically and economically handicapped nations: South Sudan with capital Juba and (North) Sudan with capital Khartoum. Why did the common wisdom fail to guide? Why was a bigger, integral Sudan not better? By size and resources (Sudan alone occupied about half of area equivalent to all 27 European union member states) no doubt, an integral Sudan would prospectively become a heavy weight in the global arena than either of the new two Sudan nations will ever manage to. Backward-thinking political elites destroyed the common ground of human subsistence of Sudanese people- virtually separating them along religious lines for several decades. So the geographic secession of Sudan on July 9th 2011 followed a mental secession of its own people: non-Muslim, non-Arab southern Sudanese and Muslim and Arab north Sudanese, after two decades of brutal civil war.

Sudan, in its historical existence, was never monolithic by religious orientation or by ethnicity. Over hundreds of years, the country main asset was obviously the balanced co-existence of these two factors of power. The independency from UK in 1956 and subsequent Islamic-style, favored the military regimes based governments which destroyed the political, cultural and economic fabric of ancient Sudan. Over time, the balance of power shifted in favor of the Sunni-Muslim.

Why did the common wisdom fail to guide? Why was a bigger, integral Sudan not better?

Given the inability of the regime to reform the political system, a political deadlock emerged, in which 10 million Southern Sudanese, would see no options but to secede from the remaining forty million Sunni Muslims. Ironically, against the common trend, the emergence of South Sudan as sovereign African nation (number 54) was overdue and has been overwhelmingly expected in the global political stage.

The key lesson out of Sudan secession is certainly that, in the hierarchy of needs, freedom would and must come first. Against the common wisdom of other nations, global bargaining power, global political stance, and economic development would not matter to ordinary people without a fundamental right of self-determination. Southern Sudan just recognized that. Hence, for them, size did not matter. ■

C.M.T. Assado

**Ms. Clementinah Burheni:
Native Xitsonga Speaker Visits Central CT. State University**

Based on a 2011-2012 Faculty Development grant awarded to Assistant Professor of Linguistics and TESOL, Seunghun Lee, Ms. Clementinah Burheni, a student at the University of Venda in the Limpopo province of South Africa, visited Central and other universities for nearly a month this semester. Ms. Burheni's keen ability to speak and to translate the Xitsonga language, (One of the official languages spoken in South Africa) earned her a trip to the United States and to CCSU for the first time. She assisted Dr. Lee and Dr. Elizabeth Selkirk of U-Mass with research that is intended to structurally understand and to preserve this language. As their "consultant" she found her interactions to be very enjoyable and interesting. The following paragraph summarizes Burheni's visit in her own words:



My visit to United States as consultant of the Xitsonga language was such an eye opening experience for me. Working with Dr. Lee and Dr. Selkirk was fulfilling for me because I never stopped speaking Xitsonga, although I was far away from home. It was a privilege for me to be exposed to American universities. My stay at CCSU left me with unforgettable memories that will remain precious forever in my life. I realize how important it is to be creative in welcoming people from different places. I write this because of how warmly I was welcomed and treated at the Center for Africana Studies. The different professors and activities I was exposed to encouragement me to introduce linguistics to young people. I give thanks to Dr. Seunghun Lee, Dr. Selkirk and the universities of CCSU and UMass. Their universities' contributions and their research made this visit to the United States possible for me, so I thank all of you very much. Additionally, I thank my university (University of Venda) in the Limpopo province of South Africa. ■

Clementinah Burheni

INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL AT CCSU: "CROSSING BORDERS"

On April 22nd 2012 the International Festival was held at Central Connecticut State University in Alumni Hall of the Student Center. Starting at 12 noon, the festival lived up to its title of "crossing borders" by the aesthetic visuals, decorative costumes, and captivating performances. The sampling of international treats and dishes added to the warm and inviting atmosphere. Lasting for several hours, the festival celebration included performances such as the Connecticut Capoeira (Brazil), Wumei Dancers (China), Peru Folklore, and a Portugese Folk Group. Sponsors of this event included but were not limited to the Center for International Education, Adminstrative Affairs, and the Office of Diversity and Equity.

*Left Photo:
Left to Right:
Alyssa Wang, 8,
Yilan Tang, 7*

*Right Photo:
Adam Zheng, son,
Yi Zheng, father*



CONNCAS STUDENTS ON THE PATH OF ACADEMIC SUCCESS

Over the summer, ConnCAS students completed college-level courses and earned four credits to begin their college career. Four students received awards for high academic honors: Candice Fuller, Adamski Celestin, Alessandra Salmon and Adam Washington. Three students received special awards. The Dr. Hakim Salahu-Din Citizenship Award was presented to Tiffany McDonald and Matthew Reid, and The Dr. Charles Mate-Kole Leadership Award was presented to Trudy-Ann Riley.

Students participated in The College Success: From Access to Success Program (William Fothergill and Sandra Zak, facilitators). They also took field trips to the Black Heritage Trail, the Museum of African American History in Boston, and participated in the Newington Adventure Challenge Course for leadership training and team building. In addition, they attended a variety of lectures. Students were also assigned mentors through the Mentoring Program (Pat and Jane Gardner, Coordinators).

Over the past academic year, there were many opportunities for our ConnCAS students to shine. For example, the following students, Bilal Afolabi, Adamski Celestin, Salam Measho and Alessandra Salmon received GPAs of 3.0 or higher. Bilal and Adamski were also awarded The Ebenezer D. Bassett Award as part of the Man Enough Support Initiative (William Fothergill and Larry Hall, Coordinators). Daniella Arthurs accepted an internship with Pratt and Whitney for this upcoming summer. Rayna Dunham was selected as an FYE Peer Leader for Fall 2012, and Sherreida Reid will receive one of only five President’s Citation Awards.

We are proud of all our ConnCAS students and wish them continued success at CCSU.

Dr. Shelly M. Jones, Coordinator
Africana ConnCAS



ConnCAS STUDENTS 2012

ConnCAS students pose for pictures after learning about internships from TRAVELERS/INROADS personnel. The sessions were organized by Math professor and ConnCAS coordinator, Shelly M. Jones in collaboration with CCSU’s School of Business.

THE SOJOURNER TRUTH NEWSLETTER

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